The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art Announces Major New Acquisition

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Sleeping Christ Child by Filippo Parodi, assistant to Bernini and leading sculptor of the Genoese Baroque

Cleveland, OH (December 11, 2018)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) today announced the acquisition of Filippo Parodi's *Sleeping Christ Child*, an outstanding example of monumental Italian Baroque narrative sculpture.

Parodi began his career as a woodcarver and subsequently worked in both wood and stone. He made two trips to Rome where he worked in the studio of Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), the leading sculptor of the Italian Baroque. The French sculptor Pierre Puget (1620–1694), active in Genoa during the 1660s, was also a key influence. After Puget's departure from the city in 1669, Parodi became the leading Genoese sculptor in wood and marble.

Sculpted about 1675 for Genoa's wealthy Durazzo family, Parodi's *Sleeping Christ Child*, a rare signed work, is a compelling interpretation of a traditional Christian subject. Christ, depicted as a young child, is sprawled on a bed of straw, his head thrown back in slumber and his right arm dangling. A subtle radiance framing his head indicates his divinity. The artist used varying degrees of polish to differentiate surface textures: Christ's body is burnished to a soft gleam, while his hair and the straw bedding are more roughly carved, absorbing rather than reflecting the light. Parodi's attention to the sensuous, tactile qualities of his chosen subject reveal his study with Bernini. Indeed, Parodi was often referred to as "Genoa's Bernini."

"A masterpiece of Italian Baroque sculpture, Parodi's *Sleeping Christ Child* takes its place alongside the museum's late altarpiece by Caravaggio of the crucifixion of Saint Andrew and *Boy Drinking* by Annibale Carracci as a superb example of the exuberant, emotionally charged art of the 17th century in Europe," said William Griswold, director of the CMA. "It is an object destined to become one of the signature works in our collection."

Images of the sleeping Christ Child appear often in Renaissance and Baroque art, introducing both a premonition of Christ's fate and underscoring the notion of sleep as a metaphor for death. Here, ears of wheat among the straw allude to the Eucharistic sacrament. Parodi adapted the composition of his *Sleeping Christ Child* for at least two later sculptures depicting the dead Christ: a polychrome wood sculpture in the Church of San Luca in Genoa; and the central figure in a pietà made for the Church of Santa Giustina in Padua. In both, Christ's lifeless body assumes a pose nearly identical to that of the sleeping child in the newly acquired work. The languid sensuality of Parodi's figure recalls secular models as well, namely the Sleeping Cupid, a popular theme since antiquity.

Monumental works by Parodi, or other leading sculptors of the Italian Baroque, rarely appear on the market. Apart from occasional portrait busts, *Sleeping Christ Child* is among the most important marble sculpture by an associate of Bernini to have come on the market in recent years. The CMA's existing collection of European sculpture from the late 16th through the 18th centuries includes individual works of exceptional quality. With this new acquisition, the collection now boasts an outstanding example of monumental narrative sculpture that brings an exciting dimension to the museum's presentation of Italian Baroque art. *Sleeping Christ Child* is now on view in the Reid Gallery (217).

Sleeping Christ Child, c. 1675. Filippo Parodi (Italian, 1630–1702). Marble; 63 x 102 x 42 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna Jr.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant

international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Press Announcements [2]

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